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INFO RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 003295

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/13/2016

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SUBJECT: KUWAITI FM TROUBLED BY LEBANON, BUT IDENTIFIES
IRAQ AND IRAN AS GREATER THREATS TO MIDDLE EAST SECURITY

REF: KUWAIT 3294

Classified By: Ambassador Richard LeBaron for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

11. (C/NF) Summary: The Ambassador met with Kuwaiti Deputy PM and FM Shaykh Dr. Mohammed on August 14 to review regional developments. The FM welcomed UNSCR 1701 and believed the dispatch of a more robust UNIFIL force would help the ceasefire to hold. He stressed the need for continued international support to the GOL and called for neighboring countries to cease interfering. Despite the urgency of the situation in Lebanon, the FM said conditions in Iraq and Iran's role in the region were greater threats. He was deeply worried that Iraq was on the verge of becoming a failed state and feared that Al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups could use its resources and size to wreak havoc. The GOK urged Iran to pressure Moqtada Al-Sadr and the Jaysh Al-Mahdi to prevent the disintegration of Iraq and hoped to convene an Iraq neighbors' meeting on the margins of the UNGA. In addition to concerns about Iran's role in Iraq and Lebanon, the GOK was disturbed that the nuclear issue remained unresolved. Kuwait urged Iran to respond to the EU-3 proposal and feared the threat of UNSC sanctions would lead Tehran to do something drastic in Lebanon, Iraq, or elsewhere. End summary.

Lebanon: A Long Hot Summer

12. (C/NF) The Ambassador met with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Shaykh Dr. Mohammed Al-Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah on August 14. He opened the meeting by congratulating Shaykh Dr. Mohammed on his re-appointment as Deputy PM and FM following successful parliamentary elections, and praised the democratic reforms undertaken by Kuwait amid regional strife. Turning to recent developments, he thanked Kuwait for its support of Lebanon and asked for the GOK's views on making further progress on UN Security Council Resolution 1701. The FM described Lebanon as a "hot item," but said from the Kuwaiti perspective, there were greater concerns. He was confident the ceasefire will "gradually hold" over the next six months and said its success and strength would depend on the number of forces deployed and the establishment and protection of a buffer zone. That Hizballah reneged on its promises was to be expected, and once Hizballah was forced out of the south, the relevance of its armed presence would diminish. It was important for the international community to continue to support the GOL and Lebanese people (the FM noted GOK disappointment that humanitarian assistance flights to Lebanon were denied clearance and said the GOK still wanted to send aid), and neighboring countries needed to cease meddling in Lebanese affairs. He opined that the next serious problem in Lebanon would arise in the context of the

internal political re-ordering following the repositioning of Hizballah weapons above the Litani.

Iraq: Even Hotter

13. (C/NF) Despite the weeks of devastation in Lebanon, Shaykh Dr. Mohammed called developments in Iraq "much more ominous." The GOK was deeply concerned about ongoing violence and feared Iraq would become a failed state. He said Somalia and Afghanistan were failed states without any resources and still became havens for Al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups. The prospects of what such groups could do in Iraq given its size and natural resources were disastrous. He told the Ambassador the Amir discussed these concerns on August 13 with Iranian Deputy FM Mehdi Mostafavi and called on Iran to exert pressure on Moqtada Al-Sadr and the Jaysh Al-Mahdi to prevent Iraq from breaking up. He added that Iranian and Kuwaiti officials also discussed convening an Iraq neighbors' group meeting on the margins of the UNGA to see what could be done to help Iraq. He stressed, "We have to take precautionary measures." (See reftel for discussion of helping Iraq confront fuel shortages.)

Iran: Playing with Fire

14. (C/NF) Shaykh Dr. Mohammed also noted GOK concerns about Iran. He said the Amir delivered a clear message to Mostafavi, whom the FM described as a "low level operative," on Iran's need to cooperate with the international community in both Lebanon and Iraq. He added that a neighbors' meeting would provide an opportunity for regional leaders to reinforce to Iran that it is "playing with fire." In

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addition to Iran's regional interference, the GOK remained concerned about the nuclear issue and was troubled that Mostafavi said Iran would reconsider its IAEA membership due to recent UNSC pressure. Shaykh Dr. Mohammed said Iran had planned to respond to the EU-3 proposal, but passage of UNSCR 1696 created a new dynamic. Iran would not respond well to the imposition of sanctions and such a move could trigger retaliatory measures in Iraq, Lebanon, or some other place. Shaykh Dr. Mohammed pressed Mostafavi on the need to respond to the EU proposal, but given its influence in Iraq, Iran, and the Iranian FM's recent Beirut meeting with his French counterpart, he sensed Iran felt it had a lot of options.

15. (C/NF) When asked by the Ambassador whether the Iranians felt strengthened by Hizballah's performance in Lebanon, the Kuwaiti FM noted the spectacle of an Iranian FM meeting with the French FM at the Iranian embassy in Beirut. Shaykh Dr. Mohammed speculated that the Syrians must have been aghast at this demonstration of Iranian influence in Syria's neighborhood and in the Arab world.

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LeBaron